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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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The peculiar case of
Heinrich Heine

The Elephant Man

Graham Greene's 'Dr Fischer'
and 'For Whom the Bell Chimes'Writing a biography,
by Antony AlpersJack Dempsey; Anthony Powell;
Ernest OppenheimerJohn Bayley on 'Othello'
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Jack Hazan's 'Rude Boy'Twelve pages of Children's Books
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Reviews by Anthony Burgess, Elaine Moss,
Victoria Glendinning, Edward Blighen
French, German and Italian books

One of S. G. Hulme Beaman's original Tostington drawings, from a collection recently re-issued (see page 355)

J. H. Co. 116

The spoils of revolution

By Norman Stone

RUBEN C. WILLIAMS: Russian Art and American Money, 1900-1940. 200 pp. Harvard University Press. £10.50. 0 674 78122 8

This book concerns a minor but important current in the great tide of art over the Atlantic in the past hundred years. In the 1920s and 1930s, great quantities of Russian property, state or private, were sold off to American buyers (and, in the case of the Codex Sinaiticus, the British Museum). The high point of such selling occurred in 1930-31, when the multi-millionaire Andrew Mellon acquired twenty-two masterpieces of European art from the Marquis de Saxe collection. He paid \$654,953 for a set which included Rembrandt's "Polish Nobleman" and "Woman Holding a Pink" Veronese's "Finding of Moses", Velázquez's "Infant X" the \$1,166,400 that he paid for Raphael's "At a Feast" was the highest price ever paid for a single picture, and the Mellon sale alone made up one third of the value of Soviet exports to America in that year. In a similar deal the year before, Calouste Gulbenkian paid £120,000 for two Rembrandts, "The Music Lesson" and "Watteau's 'Mezzetin' and 'Laurel'". At the time, he was negotiating the deal. "I have always held the opinion that the objects which have been in your museums for many years should not be sold... even to me."

It is difficult to disagree with that, and to this day the subject is seldom discussed in the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks had always been respectful towards the Russian art collections: even when they seemed to the West to be at the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace, she fired blank shot to avoid harming the building. True, there was, early on, an almost Futurist strand in the Russian Revolution, and the *Proletkult* people would quite happily have taken a flame-thrower to what they saw as a dead museum-culture. But their influence declined, like that of the radical feminism, as Stalin's rose; and though Stalin, like Lenin, was mostly indifferent to art, he could at least appreciate the propaganda value of it—whether of native Russian art, or of the great collections amassed by the Tsars (mainly Catherine the Great).

The Tsarist government had also, dimly, appreciated such propaganda value, and Robert Williams begins his story with an episode that will delight connoisseurs of government ineptitude. In 1904 the city of St. Louis staged a centennial "Louisiana Purchase Exposition", for which the International Contributions were invited. The Russians were invited, but then had it dismantled because the Russo-Japanese War had just broken out; but they did contribute some six hundred works of (Russian) art, including Repin's Medvedev and Kurovskii, which were in boxes in the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building. These pictures, although very good of their kind,

were given little recognition by the prize-awarding bodies.

The Tsarist government had handed management of the affair to a Russian merchant, Gruwald, who lost money and tried to recoup his losses by selling the paintings at auction in New York. But the US Customs then demanded a tariff, from which the paintings had been exempted earlier on the grounds that they were only for display. Gruwald could not pay this, and roshly gave power of attorney to a crooked Californian lawyer, Kowalski. After several years of part-Chesterfield part-Bazooka legal and financial wrangling, the paintings were still off, for about a tenth of their value; many have disappeared, and the others seem to be in the Oakland Art Museum. The artist who did not seem to have had a penny from this, and in many cases they had not, authorized the sale, but the Russian envoy in Washington, a Polish-Bah figure named Baroo Rosen, would do nothing to help.

Just after the Russian Civil War, a great deal more Russian art arrived in the United States. Some of it came via galleries in Europe, who had a ready market for it, and some came directly from fleeing noblemen: Prince Yusupov emerged from the Crimea with two rolled-up Rembrandts which he sold to the Philadelphia businessman, Joseph Widener (another legally legal wrangle followed). The Soviet government also sold off icons, Fyerg, and furniture through the agency Antikvartir. In the early years there were exhibitions of Russian modern art—Larionov, Rodchenko, Ginzburg, Burliuk—mainly in New York galleries, but the Soviet government also sold off icons, Fyerg, and furniture through the agency Antikvartir. In the early years there were exhibitions of Russian modern art—Larionov, Rodchenko, Ginzburg, Burliuk—mainly in New York galleries, but the Soviet government also sold off icons, Fyerg, and furniture through the agency Antikvartir.

Robert Williams has traced some of the middlemen in all of this.

Blind eyes in the market

By William Mostyn-Owen

LILIAN M. C. RANDALL: The Diary of George A. Lucas. An American Art Agent in Paris 1859-1909. Volumes 1: 316pp. Volume 2: 376pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £27.50. 0 691 03993 X

SAMUEL P. AVERY: The Diaries 1871-1882. 936pp. New York: Arno. \$60. 0 405 11517 2

To open the heavy package containing the two massive volumes of Lucas's memoirs fills the recipient with anticipatory excitement. The cover photograph shows an amiable bearded old gentleman, a sort of good-natured Tolstoy, wearing a shaggy dressing gown and seated before several framed pictures, at his feet a portfolio of prints. This is George Lucas, an American collector who settled in Paris in 1857 and remained there until his death in 1909. Our appetites are further

whetted by the exciting revelations in the editor's foreword. In a breathless account she tells of the discovery of this diary, her search for so long in the vaults of the Peabody Institute Library at Baltimore; how, armed with a medievalist's keen appreciation of primary source material and background in 19th century art, based on an undergraduate's thesis on French-Italian caricatures of Napoleon III, she embarked on the task at hand; how she was encouraged by the enthusiasm of Peter Wilson and Deoys Sutton; how recurring doubts as to the sanity of undertaking this project obliterated were alleviated by fascination as the subject unfolded; how the transcript was aided by a grant from the Ford Foundation; how background research and preparation of the index were helped by thirty-three individuals; how information unearthed with the aid of thirty-three individuals in twenty-four institutions; how the author found her way to Westcott Porter, topk charge of setting and laying out the diary text; and how, at costs continued to rise, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation eliminated "the final hurdles".

After such a dramatic and well-run steepchase it is sad to have to report that the diaries must be regarded as one of the great misadventures of art-historical research. At no point does Lucas live up to all that the reader has been led to expect: he throws up interesting light on the collectors of the day, their tastes or their purchases.

The astonishing thing about these faithfully and carefully transcribed diaries, covering the years from 1852 to 1908 in 965 pages of double columns is that Lucas makes no comment at all about the artists and movements of the day. Even, Popov would have made a better job of it: indeed, some of the few moments when the diary comes to any kind of life are in entries which recall the unfortunate episodes of the "scrooper" or the awkward mistakes over Mr. Pinguet's pictures. On April 12, 1859, for example, he records the following memorable entry: "Fall from omnibus on Port Neuf, while getting off. Due to molting." He has a dreadful social slight on December 13, 1857, when

man machinery was such that in May the contents of the Struganov Palace were auctioned off in Berlin, for the derisory price of \$600,000, which included \$10,000 for a Ruysdael "Landscape". Lucas, through the Berlin Matthiesen Gallery that contact was made with Colnaghi's in London, and then with Knoedler's and Joseph Duveen in New York, for the great Hellenistic sales to Mellon and Gullikman. After the affair was over, the head of the Matthiesen Gallery, Zatzewitz, complained that he had not been rewarded for his share in the deal. No one seems to have paid any attention to his complaint. The paintings involved have now ended up in museums, especially in Philadelphia and Washington, after the apparently standard, lengthy suits for tax-evasion.

One entrepreneur in the field of Russian art sales is still alive: Arnold Hammer, whose fortune now made up of oil, baking soda, cattle and whisky, owed its origin to a concession acquired by his family to operate a pencil factory in Russia in the 1920s. When the factory was taken over by the Soviet state, Hammer was able to gain compensation; he was allowed to export the very considerable store of Russian treasure that his family had built up. Later, it seems, the Soviet government had very good relations with Mikoyan, and Hammer was able to transfer his treasures (Fabergé, Romanov Crown Jewels) in the United States; yet again, the prices appear to be amazingly low, a small gold Easter Egg, for instance, made by Fabergé for the Tsaritsa, selling at \$450.

Russian Art and American Money 1900-1940 will cause deep revulsion. The American ambassador in 1937-38, at the time of the Great Purge, was Joseph E. Davies, a lawyer friend of Roosevelt. Davies was notorious for

visiting the dealer Blug "where I was told they had not the honour to know me" in July 1939, was a discovery of this diary, her search for so long in the vaults of the Peabody Institute Library at Baltimore; how, armed with a medievalist's keen appreciation of primary source material and background in 19th century art, based on an undergraduate's thesis on French-Italian caricatures of Napoleon III, she embarked on the task at hand; how she was encouraged by the enthusiasm of Peter Wilson and Deoys Sutton; how recurring doubts as to the sanity of undertaking this project obliterated were alleviated by fascination as the subject unfolded; how the transcript was aided by a grant from the Ford Foundation; how background research and preparation of the index were helped by thirty-three individuals; how information unearthed with the aid of thirty-three individuals in twenty-four institutions; how the author found her way to Westcott Porter, topk charge of setting and laying out the diary text; and how, at costs continued to rise, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation eliminated "the final hurdles".

His health caused him much trouble and not a little counting. On April 22, 1858, however, a strange entry: "At home—Blue Pill" while December 30, 1875, reads "at home all day with pills". Between February and June, 1894, he records 42 dentist's appointments. Such a hectic existence was presumably the result of his eating habits, reference to which recurs so often that his favourite items are reduced to abbreviations (carefully listed by the editor). Thus "Trined" means omelette, "WR" is whisky rabbit; "EP" is soup forte, and "B" is bottle of beer.

The most telling example of his lack of common or critical judgment is in his entry for May 25, 1863, perhaps the most crucial entry in the history of Impressionism. He writes, "at Exhibition Chempie Elysee—opening of rejected pictures." And then the next day he does not add a single qualifying reflection but merely states, "Corried draw list to be cleaned, etc."

His purchases of works by "important" artists seemed often doomed to failure: in 1906 he managed to dispose of a "bogus" Turner and Delacroix, but also managed to buy what he calls "a good figure of Manet, later given to the Baltimore Museum and no longer accepted as authentic."

There are innumerable references to minor artists. For example, he acquired for William Walters of Baltimore several works by Emile-Lambinet, an obscure follower of Corot and Daubigny whose one claim to fame is that he and Brouillette were the only artists mentioned by name in the novel of Henry James. Lucas himself assembled a collection of works by some 900 painters, and it is doubtful whether the majority of readers will have as much as heard of even 100 of them.

Another point to which Lucas supplied a steady stream of pictures was the New York dealer, auctioneer, Samuel P. Avery, whose pictures have also been assembled in the past few years by a triple team of whom I have reviewed the editor of the *Transatlantic* volume

suggesting, almost alone among non-communist commentators, that the Purge really had been provoked by a genuine plot.

From Robert Williams's page we can tell the background of this extraordinary assertion. Davis married, as her third husband, the heiress Marjorie Post (1870-1950), "Miss Post's" "Log Cabin Syrup" and "Pine Tree Syrup" and of them were born on picking up an enormous Russian collection. Davis was given every facility by the Stalin government to amass Russian treasures which had been expropriated by force or fraud from their terrified owners, who sold them through the very Commission Shops. Davis and his wife were even allowed to pay for their things in black-market roubles worth only one-fiftieth of the official rate at which Davis bought. At a result, he acquired an amazing collection (now at the Chicago Museum of Art in Wisconsin) a sum that to him and his wife (who had five years, then, recent being the length of a full bail-pitch) must have been a big result. He spent only half of the time in Moscow, but he was not to spend, and his favours to Stalin have to be as in context. In March 1938, Marjorie was given, for her birthday, "a Fabergé topaz box set in gold and diamonds, a malachite set in gold, a cigarette box, a Fabergé clock in pink enamel and gold."

Soviet sales of works of art to finance the country's industrialization, brought in 4,500,000 rubles in 1929, 6,300,000 in 1930, 2,700,000 in 1931, 1,900,000 in 1932. This is the depressing story told by Robert Williams has told. His last, based on a thorough search of American archives, but, perhaps inevitably, he cannot say much about the Soviet side. He does not draw a moral from his tale, but he tells it with conviction.

Complete Works of William Averys. Avery's diary makes an equally trivial and even more accurate record. The entries are mostly reproduced in a level of twenty-two lines to the page, which cover 730 pages between 1871 and 1882. This is supplemented by a long introduction containing pretentious and uncritical judgments on the New York art market from the 1860s to the 1880s in which the editors' stated aim is to "add to the recognition of Avery's contribution to American artistic development." From Avery's artistic catalogue they have at about compiling a series of graphic notes on "art-buying practices." These cover popularity of subjects in which "fancy still-life" is at the bottom of the league table and genre painting at the top; subjects in relation to naves; and genre portraits (the bottom, often the top); and occupations of buyers in relation to occupation (lawyers paying most) and occupation of buyers in relation to occupation (men in most port away ahead of the field).

It is useless to pretend that Lucas had any serious influence on the art world in Baltimore, or anywhere else for that matter. William Walters shared Lucas's taste; and he only with his son Henry took the famous collection really. Walters, Lucas knew the younger, though he was never his adviser, though he was lucky enough to accompany him during some memorable purchases.

Similarly, Avery's clients (the great New Yorkers) consisted of such New Yorkers as William Vanderbilt, John T. Taylor, John William T. Blodgett and Josiah Flisk, none of whom was in contact with anything of significance to the newly founded Metropolitan Museum.

Both these books represent the unselective use of private support and Foundation grants. The fact that such support is now defunct makes it all the more imperative that these records be given to the public, which will seriously contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the development and collecting of nineteenth-century American

art.

MICHAEL HOWELL and PETER FORD: The True History of the Elephant Man. 190pp. Allison and Busby. £6.95. 0 85031 353 8

The story of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man, is one to strike pity and terror into any heart—though to what degree is likely to be determined by one's wisdom to say. Joseph's very existence raises the unanswerable problem of divine justice as well as evoking a multitude of possible human responses—outrage, disgust, magnanimity. The phenomenon and popularity of the Elephant Man—Ashley Montagu's quasi-scientific study which he subtitled "A Study in Human Dignity" (1970), Bernard Pomeroy's play which has been a smash hit on Broadway and has been followed by a film, and now a more intensive investigation, *The True History of the Elephant Man*, by Michael Howell and Peter Ford—may be viewed as examples of civilized humanitarianism or as respectable excuses for indulging in primitive voyeurism. Are we really, or celebrating Merrick's dignity as a human being by all this interest, or should we not let the poor soul rest in peace?

Joseph Merrick was the most famous freak in history. His birth certificate records that he was born Joseph Carey Merrick on August 5, 1862, in Leicester and that he was the son of Joseph Rockley Merrick, warehouseman, and Mary Jane Merrick. Since his parents were married on December 29, 1861, Howell and Ford conclude that his mother was pregnant at the time of his marriage, but surely it is possible that the child was premature. And could the birth have been precipitated by an accident? Merrick always attributed his terrifying appearance to his mother's experience of falling and stumbling aside from the feet of a parading elephant. These huge beasts were so indispensable a attraction of the nineteenth-century England. Rational judgement would dismiss the coincidence as preposterous, the stuff of folklore; but Howell and Ford cannot categorically deny that she might have had such an accident.

Joseph was born in the heart of the Industrial Revolution amid the filth and squalor and degradation of Victorian slums. Even if

he had been born reasonably healthy, his well-formed, his life expectancy would not have been more than forty years, and his existence would have been one of grinding poverty; but to be maimed, grotesquely maimed, in such a world was a hell beyond comprehension.

In actual fact his mother did not notice anything remarkable about him until he was nearly two, when a firm swelling in his lower lip began to grow and spread as a hard tumour into his right cheek until the child's upper lip was pushed outwards by a tumour and bewildered, she watched a hmy lump appear on his forehead, his skin grow rough in texture, and one arm and both feet swell alarmingly. A perfectly normal boy and girl followed Joseph's birth, although the mother was in the midst of a few years.

Legend, following the opinion of the surgeon, Frederick Treves, who later became interested in Joseph's case, would have it that his mother had abandoned him to the workhouse, but Howell and Ford, through intensive research, have uncovered her firm handwriting in the marriage register with the cross which she signed her second son's death certificate and take this, I think rightly, as evidence of her agonized state at the time. Further, more, Merrick, always treasured his memory as beautiful and tender; and surely his own gentle, uncomplaining nature must have been formed in childhood when he experienced a mother's love, especially as she did not die until he was nearly eleven. "Her death," he wrote, "was the greatest misfortune of my life... peace be to her, she was a good mother to me."

His father then moved in with a widow whom he soon married. Joseph's life began to take on the quality of a nightmare as he became the butt of his stepmother's shrill abuse. His father sent him into the streets to hawk, but with his inhumanly bizarre appearance, people turned away from him in horror; and after a whipping from his father, he left home forever at the age of fifteen. An uncle, who took pity on him, brought him in from the streets, and for two years he lived in a state of relative tranquillity, although there was no remission in the advance of his distorting disease. The commissioners refused to renew his hawking licence and at seventeen, aware that he could no longer

A spectacle of suffering

By Phyllis Grosskurth

THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT of 1834 had been intended to make conditions in the workhouse so insupportable that its inmates would prefer the slightly less hellish world of the streets, and Howell and Ford give a terrifying picture of life in the workhouse, a journey which Merrick was always to remember with a shudder as the worst period in a life that seemed to be cast in perpetual shadow.

After twelve weeks Joseph Merrick was so demoralized that he returned to the streets; but within two days, in desperation, he again sought the refuge of the workhouse. The reason for re-admission was reported as "No work". The ghastliness of the next four years is too terrible to contemplate. In addition to the expected vicissitudes, the prominence on Merrick's jaw began to grow so alarmingly that it became difficult even to force food into his mouth and his speech was almost incomprehensible. He was then referred to the Leicester Infirmary where, he recalled, he had to undergo an operation on any face, having three or four ounces of flesh cut away. It was this particular aspect of his physiognomy which gained him the title of "the Elephant Man".

What hope, what future, what possibility lay open to this pitiful creature? One wonders how many times he turned his limitations over in his mind. There was no doubt that he was a freak, and with a

fortune that characterized every action of his life he came to the stark realization, not that he could capitalize on his infirmity, but that it offered him his only salvation. Accordingly, he wrote to one Sam Torr, a star of the music halls, offering himself for exhibition.

On this as on other occasions, Merrick's response was to accept a fate that would have seemed unbearable to most of his fellow men. A pariah, he had no recourse but to become a spectacle, put on display to satisfy the crudest voyeurism. His aspect was an repellent that the enterprising Torr saw its commercial appeal immediately. Torr also realized that even a monster could soon lose its novelty, so his captive had to be kept perpetually on the move following the circuit of the fairgrounds.

At this point another figure enters the story, an associate of Torr's by the name of Tom Norman, who was later to become a renowned impresario. Howell and Ford describe him grimly as "the nearest Joseph Merrick came to having a fairly godfather"; and indeed, he seems to have treated his charge with kindness. His role was that of catalyst—once he took Joseph to London, the story of the Elephant Man emerges from clouded memory to recorded fact.

In November 1884, while Norman was exhibiting him in an empty greengrocer's shop in the Mile End Road opposite the London Hospital, his speech was unintelligible... I supposed that Merrick was an imbecile and had been an imbecile from birth."

Troves arranged for Merrick to go to the London Hospital, where

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The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830-1857

Selected, Edited, and Translated by Francis Steegmuller

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Journal of the

Attendant difficulties

By J. R. Ballam

Picci! con me in campagna by All Blugusch, for instance, one of the very popular series of almost entirely illustrated books for younger children, takes a farm and crams the pages with figures busy feeding

Advertising in these numbers is always worth while as many Children's Librarians not only read these Numbers but also keep them for future reference.

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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

**Abelard Schuman, The Blackie Group,
Furnival House, 14/18 High Holborn, London,
W.C.1.**

clock, an apple, a snowman—but the format and approach of the books are more reminiscent of the Dick Bruna books. The illustrations themselves have considerably more charm of a rather unusual kind, but there is nothing Italian about them. Even the

La 5 mogli di Barbrizzoloto carries the symbolism further: a epolit and dictatorial maharajah rejects each of his five wives in turn, for being too intelligent, too stupid, too clever, too studious and too frivolous. One by one, he despatches them to a fire.

It will be seen from this that the big world eaters early into a *guano* vision. If shirtless Spaniards may said to represent the big world. Here *Isa mama mama* from Turi. *Nena chuncheta*. *Isa mama* & *andito* a moose *papa*. *Pe and a* & Turi. a *chumpon* *dembatita*. *Isa* *chumpon* being puppets or dolls. From Milan comes

Gianni Rodari, who won the 1970 Andersen Prize for children's literature, was a pioneer in the use of language. His characters must not be written down to, their language they read must be the one they hear every day, as on television. The result is a colloquial, even cliché style, best brought out in the very short stories. *Foot on a Clef* is a collection of 100, as introduction explains, as bed-time stories told over the telephone by travelling salesman to his daughter at home in Varese. The tales tell themselves as a curiously surrealistic, but unexpected and the predictable, which is why they are shying away from horror, a little. If Roald Dahl were rewriting Hans Anderson, Rodari's poem, in *FWN* trochee in cado e in tern is a tongue to check pop on words and sound. The result is a call to arms, to mock the sort of verse that is studied by school children. The strongest impression that remains from his books is one of pleasure in pleasure in the writing, confidence in the result, a closeness to his readers, a willingness to be patronizing or the stilled about it.

A charming and useful book, this especially for those who, like myself, are fascinated by the divers of living dialect which Italy is so lucky enough to possess. What an anthology lacks—apart from rhythm from Bologna told to me by my wife and from Rome blurted, lo Romano, ojanter, by my son-in-law. Italian mothers are great

To turn to Cor's Magic is inevitable. The ontilimax. Greavon's previous children have been enjoyable, faithful, yet also rather derivative. Cor's Magic is ambitious and but it has no real heart. The plot is hockeyed, the drug mixture of modern old-fashioned children's which makes it hard to hant in 1979.

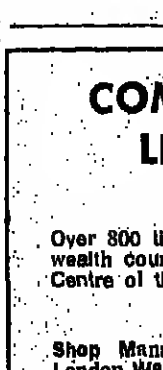
ALLAN WRIGHT : AHLBERG and JOE
Mr Casmo the Conjuror
Kestrel/Puffin £1.95 (no par back
60p]
07226 5658 0
014 62 3333

But it soon becomes clear that this is no ordinary lizard. In fact, it is a dragon, able to talk to humans and his friend Emma, and is very useful, this—to make himself visible or invisible at will.

settling; but it works just as well when the aim is to disregard assumptions. Mrs. Plug goes out to plumb unimpeded by bonnet and apron, and though she routs a robber with her blowtorch and plumb line leak in on ocean liner, she has a lipetick in her toolbag: Miss B.

Wbar he lacks in footwear, however, is made up for in other directions. Wa sees him, for example, dancing o Jlg while his eisera plays no the flute, scooting along a cowboy lane with what could be Arabab and friends clinging on behind him. end, in o splendid throo-curved hat, taking the saluto while a troop of mica march past. Economical, deceptively slapdash, glowing with colour, the pictures come alive on the page. It le a delightful book one that could become a favourite.

Price £1 (postage UK 20p. Overseas 50p)
Shop Manager, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street
London W8 5AC



The stuff of history

By Gillian Cross

DAVID REES:
The Green Bough of Liberty
Doubtless, £3.95.
0 214 72187 1

KATHLEEN COLLISON-MURLEY:
Civil War at the Rectory
Doubtless, £4.50.
0 460 06790 2

History is intractable stuff. The novelist telling a "true" story has special problems. He must create recognizable characters while conforming to their recorded actions, and must shape a satisfying narrative out of events which have, perhaps, no tidy pattern of their own. Moreover, he must somehow impart the background information which is necessary if the reader is to appreciate the story's implications.

David Rees, in *The Green Bough of Liberty*, deals with the Irish rising of 1798, a little-known but important rebellion in which his ancestors, the Byrnes of Ballymauna, were involved. The events of the rebellion are seen through the eyes of Ned Byrne, the youngest of three brothers, and culminate in the execution, upon false evidence, of the middle brother, Billy Byrne. The

background of the story is sketched in a workmanlike manner, but attention is focused mainly on Ned's experience of fighting. Pulse heroics are eschewed, and the realities of war and death are shown as they affect Ned's growth to maturity. By the end of the book, he can link back contentiously at his earlier romantic expectations and count the true cost of the rebellion to his family: Billy's death and the eviction of the rest of them from Ballymauna.

It is a sober book. The easy flow of David Rees's earlier writing is here abandoned, perhaps deliberately, in favour of a stiffer, more solid style. The old prints which are used as illustrations, although interesting, give the book something of the air of an old-fashioned school history book. The final effect is midway between fiction and history: although the characters are well-drawn, they are overshadowed by the constant sombre awareness of war and Ireland's history.

Civil War at the Rectory, by Kathleen Collison-Murley, is an altogether more trivial story. As its title indicates, it is set in the English Civil War, and a note on the back cover claims that it is a true story. There is nothing in the book, however, to indicate its factual basis.

The Rectory of Penfold, with its older sons, rides off to fight for the King, leaving the rest of his family

Much of this could be forgiven, of course, if the book told a good story. However, it does not really tell a story at all. The events are random, and the death of Charles at the end forms no climax, since it is not dependent on any previous incidents. Moreover, the characters have so little individuality that it is hard to take any interest in their fates.

Books like this use history merely as a fancy-dress background for characters. David Rees, although his book is harder to read and not entirely successful, has at least come to grips with the stuff of history and has managed to show convincingly that the people of the past were real people.

The strong feature of Alison Morgan's *Leaving Home* is also a feel for what it is like to be inside the hero, this time a boy in Wales. It is much harder work than Bel- laire's book, and it may be difficult to compare them in this respect. *Leaving Home* is a serious story about a boy who has never known his parents properly, whose grand- father is dead, and who has to find his way in a world of strangers. He is a miserable, with good reason, and his relationship with his uncle is such a disaster, in particular over the question of a pet goat, that Paul runs away, back to the remote hill town on which his was brought up, where even enmity would be better than un- sympathetic, restraining suburbia. The most gripping passages in this sad tale are about old people: Alison Morgan can describe old men with lightness and wit, like a real understanding, and she also gives a touching account of the wretched, housebound but indelible mar- riage of Paul's aunt and uncle. But somehow these are inappropriate to a book for this age group. The uneasy relationship between Paul and his cousin is convincing, but depressing. However, children's books don't have to be either easy or happy, and there will be some children who will enjoy this.

Under the Mountain is more concerned with the landscape of the mind than anything on the map, although the story itself is a "volcanic" one, with a volcano erupting in the shape of a young girl's life. The book is a masterpiece of the genre, with a powerful, almost unbearable, emotional force. It is a book that will stay with you, and it is a book that will stay with you.

Recent films set in the Australian bush have reminded those from "home" how very alien the Australian landscape is. The language and culture have remained pretty much the same, but the difference in climate and geography are staggering. Four books which come from the other side of the world are all, in various ways, dominated by their grand and exotic settings.

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Universal themes

By Judith Elkin

FORBES STUART:
The Mermaid's Revenge
Folk Tales from Britain and Ireland
Illustrated by Charles Keeping.
Abelard, £3.50.
0 200 72606 4

VIOLET WILKINS:
The Tiger and His Reflection
and other Asian Folk Tales
Illustrated by Lisa Jensen.
Haddor and Soughton, £3.50.
0 340 24635 9

URSULA SYNGE:
The Giant at the Ford
and Other Legends of the Saints
Bodley Head, £4.50.
0 370 30198 6

The range of folk tales available in children's vast and varied, compared with a few years ago. There are now some excellent collections from many parts of the world which introduce children to different folk customs and reinforce the universal themes.

The Mermaid's Revenge is a memorable collection of eight folk tales from Britain and Ireland, gathered together by Forbes Stuart. These are tales of long ago, steeped in history and tradition and set in a strong local flavour. Forbes Stuart has chosen a selection of folk tales which is simple yet evocative. He can conjure up dramatically and spine-chillingly the mystery of supernatural powers, whilst relating everyday occurrences with ease.

The tales are vivid and varied: from the tale of Men, comes the story of the mermaid who took revenge on the island's menfolk and lured 900 of them to their deaths; from Derbyshire, the haunting tale of the three green ladies, the three birch trees, who sang their eerie songs every Midsummer's Eve and needed to be courted with a wreath of late primroses; from the Shetland Isles, the tragedy of two friends bound inextricably together until they died in love with the same maiden.

Forbes Stuart's strong narrative is aptly matched by Charles Keeping's haunting line drawings. The

Out in the outback

By Cecilia Barkis

MAURICE GEE:
Under the Mountain
Oxford University Press, £3.25.
0 19 5580 40 0

ELYN MCQUEEN:
The Cold from Snowy River
Illustrated by Victor Andrews.
Hutchinson, £3.95.
0 09 140160 7

JOAN PHIPSON:
The Bird Smugglers
Methuen, £2.95.
0 454 00130 8

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look is an attractively produced addition to his two previous collections of folk tales. The Tiger and His Reflection is a less impressive collection of Asian tales, from Malaysia, Laos, Kampuchea, Bali, Singapore and China, retold by Violet Wilkins. The majority are animal tales with a twist, such as the pig's nose which was cracked and other tales familiar in Asian folk tales. It is interesting in so far as there are still few collections of Asian tales readily available here, but the style which lacks the necessary magic to bring them alive. The illustrations by Lisa Jensen are rather crude and clumsy and add little to this unmemorable book.

In contrast to these two regional collections, Ursula Syngé offers a thematic approach to her legends of the saints. The Giant at the Ford There are stories about St Christopher, St George, St Jerome and St John, St Paul and St Antony, as well as many tales about the Virgin Mary, such as St. Werburgh, St. Senan and St. Macha. The range from the amusing to the dark, far boy who eats far more than his share, until the darkly sinister tale of the blind saint, St. Oda. Syngé has chosen to write about individuals who particularly pealed to her and a warm, personal intensity pervades the book. The emphasis tends to be on the tales which reflect the folk belief of the country of origin, whether it be Ireland, England, Spain. These are extraordinary people but often living very ordinary, mundane lives; but they are totally committed to God in every action is permeated with a sense of divinity.

Ursula Syngé has the ability to create atmosphere and a sense of wonder in what is often a very simple tale. The contrast between the miraculous and the everyday happening are stark and compelling, yet the tales depict a realistic world.

Many writers, attempting to present the principles and excitement of science to young readers, can be faulted on two counts. They can be pompous and patronizing, writing down and oversimplifying their material with an implicit "you will understand this better when you are older" attitude. Alternatively, they set out their facts in a dry, pedantic style reminiscent of an unsuccessful textbook. The various authors of this series of books, with their own exceptions, triumphantly avoid the pitfalls. The results are attractive and of interest to young readers, and they are likely to stimulate youngsters to want to know more about the various subjects.

The books are a selection of the extensive "Late-Read-and-Find-Out Science Books" series, which

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Engaging the interest

By F. W. Kellaway

JOHN KAUFMANN:
Little Olinosours and Early Birds
Illustrated by the author
Harper and Row, £2.95.
0 06 192409 1

Streamlined
Illustrated by the author
Harper and Row, £2.50.
0 06 192413 X

LAURENCE FRINGLE:
Water Plants
Illustrated by Kazuo Mizumura
Harper and Row, £2.50.
0 06 194019 4

MELVIN BERGER:
Energy from the Sun
Illustrated by Giulio Maestro
Harper and Row, £2.95.
0 06 190280 2

JUDI FRIEDMAN:
The Eels' Strange Journey
Illustrated by Gill Owens
Harper and Row, £2.95.
0 06 191565 3

ALLICA:
Wild and Weally Mammots
Illustrated by the author
Harper and Row, £2.50.
0 06 190062 1

LILI DONATI:
Corals
Illustrated by Arabella Wheatley
Harper and Row, £2.95.
0 06 194178 6

JOHN F. WATERS:
A Jelly Fish is not a Fish
Illustrated by Kazuo Mizumura
Harper and Row, £2.50.
0 06 194732 6

ROMA GANE:
Water for Dinosaurs and You
Illustrated by Richard Cuffari
Harper and Row, £2.50.
0 06 191634 X

originated in America and is becoming increasingly popular in Britain. They contain simple, straightforward statements of fact, well illustrated in colour. They do not avoid technical words, but generally accompany them with a sensible, comprehensive explanation. And they do not mind if a word of three, four or even more syllables is used for the word is used, with guidance on pronunciation and an explanation of meaning. The result of all this is that the books achieve their aim of satisfying a child's curiosity and leading him or her along the paths of discovery.

The first pair of books, *Little Olinosours* and *Early Birds*, and *Streamlined*, deal with the principles of flight. John Kaufmann starts from a time when there were no birds. He describes the reptiles that evolved into, in chasing food, their scissor-like wings, the three dimensions. But "did birds begin to fly by gliding down from trees or by flapping upwards from the ground? No one knows yet which theory is right. Some day more clues may be discovered." *Streamlined* considers not only motion through the air but the water, showing how planes and submarines have been designed in imitation of the shapes of birds or fish. Practical experiments, to be carried out with simple home-made apparatus, add to the interest.

Attracting, holding and developing a reader's interest is, in my opinion, a key factor in all the books. Why, for instance, do some plants droop if over-watered, while others only survive in wet places? *Water Plants* provides the answer, and explains how some plants serve as food for others, while others are eaten for their own survival. "Go-power" is a splendid phrase to indicate the essential nature of energy, and *Energy from the Sun*, in which the photosynthesis process is explained, the energy on earth begins with the sun. Perhaps too much of the book is devoted to the recycling of water, but it is a good idea to include it.

Ursula Syngé has the ability to create atmosphere and a sense of wonder in what is often a very simple tale. The contrast between the miraculous and the everyday happening are stark and compelling, yet the tales depict a realistic world.

Many writers, attempting to present the principles and excitement of science to young readers, can be faulted on two counts. They can be pompous and patronizing, writing down and oversimplifying their material with an implicit "you will understand this better when you are older" attitude. Alternatively, they set out their facts in a dry, pedantic style reminiscent of an unsuccessful textbook. The various authors of this series of books, with their own exceptions, triumphantly avoid the pitfalls. The results are attractive and of interest to young readers, and they are likely to stimulate youngsters to want to know more about the various subjects.

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Religious books for children

By Michael Trend

Religious stories have always been popular with children's writers, and the recently published religious books for children discussed here show that the greatest interest in religious matters is still inspired by the grand stories of the Bible, The Creation, Abraham, Moses and especially Noah (three books on Noah in the past few months) are all popular. Generations are growing up with little or no formal teaching about the Bible, and the appearance of so many versions of these stories in forms specially for children may be the only way to ensure that some knowledge of the Bible is attained. The dangers of oversimplifying and sentimentalizing the Bible are also evident—as they have been since Victorian times. A wide readership is often bought dearly.

There are, however, many fewer books that teach children about other aspects of religious life. Non-Bible stories, often with a social interest, are being widely read—stories that often challenge traditional patterns of piety. But there seems to be much less emphasis placed on the teachings of the Church and on its spiritual life, and any notion that the Church is essentially a transcendental body is often ignored or neglected. In recently published religious books for children one can clearly see a reaction against the rigid learning by rote of the recent past, but this reaction is now in danger of reducing religion to bare bones and, eventually, ash.

Beginning this short survey of religious books we find, for the very young, the Collins pop-up books. The texts of these books give summaries of the stories concerned and the rest is conveyed by the illustrations and the often ingenious pop-ups. Noah's ark comes sailing in from the storm-blown waves; the Red Sea parts before Moses' and the reader's eyes, and there is a very satisfying scene where the lost sheep of the parable is making good its escape with frontically waving its legs.

Hare Susannah has illustrated a series of Bible stories for the National Christian Education Council. The two books published so far are *The Good News of Jesus* and *The Ministry of Jesus*. They follow the New Testament very closely and are attractively illustrated with line drawings. They are clearly designed to be text books ("Add Tyre and Bethesda to your map") and should succeed well in this aim.

The Bible Retold in Pictures comes with glowing references from Lord Soper, David Shepherd, David Kossell and the Archbishop of York. It is Lord Soper's comment that he has been exploring the theme of these men, feel for the project. "At this

time when so few, comparatively, make the acquaintance with the Bible's treasures, I am sure that these six books will do nothing but good." It is probably realistic to think that this strip-cartoon Bible will attract quite a large readership. The pictures are vivid and interesting, although the words are occasionally over-dramatic in the style of the comic strip. (One of the spectators to the great flood suddenly says "I don't like the look of this.")

Margaret Ralph's *Followers of Jesus* is a useful book, retelling some of the stories from the Acts of the Apostles. These stories will have the interest of being unfamiliar to many readers. The *Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible* is well illustrated and has particularly good maps. It is divided up into various sections: "Archaeology and the Bible", "Religion and the Bible", etc. The section on "Key Teaching and Events" contains articles on such subjects as Grace, Mercy and Judgment. This goes some way to restore the great complexity and diversity of the Bible, for most of the books discussed so far treat the stories in the simplest possible ways.

Alan T. Dale's *Portrait of Jesus* is an exception to this rule. Suitable for both children and adults it presents a very lively picture of Jesus. The book takes into account many of the advances made by modern scholarship, and the style of writing is enthusiastic (sometimes, perhaps, a little breathless) without ever seeming to be condescending or falsely naive as so often happens in books of this sort. Mr Dale is particularly good at bringing out the main characteristics of Jesus' ministry—the events that took place on the country roads, the incidents that took place over the supper table, and so on. Mr Dale ends with a "Personal Epilogue" which explains his own position. Among the Bible books—so often written in a style of good time—Mr Dale's book is impressive.

Apart from the Bible story, the editing life story is one of the oldest traditions in the history of the Christian church. The accounts of these are provided by the Religious Education Press's *Faith in Action* series. The well-told stories of Dr Bernardo, Martin Luther King, Edith Cavell and Brother Andrew, the Bible smuggler, are simple without being simplistic. They are suitable for a wide age range and each contains information about how to discover more about the subject of the book. The story of Edith Cavell is in many ways a good example of the series. It manages to tell the story without undue bias and when one gets to Cavell's "It is not enough to love one's own people" the reader should be able to understand how Edith Cavell both became a nationalistic symbol and how as an individual she transcended such national boundaries.

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ANDRE DEUTSCH

commentary

Gange in Garageland

By Nick Roddick

Rude Boy
West End and Manchester

Pop music has recently come to be rather respectable. First it changed its name to rock, then the posh papers acquired rock columnists and nowadays it is more likely to do a feature on rock than on sports. With all this tolerance, it's hard to see that there are still some hackles left to be raised. "The film", declared one national press review of Jack Hazan and David Mingay's *Rude Boy*, "is just an excuse for mindless violence, mindless music and mindless sex." The film, declared one national press review of Jack Hazan and David Mingay's *Rude Boy*, "is just an excuse for mindless violence, mindless music and mindless sex."

The enormous difference between the two films is in fact one of surfaces. The world of *A Bigger Splash*

condie on tour. He responds strongly in the music but not to the battle's new-anarchist politics; though he doesn't have much time for the National Front he is even more hostile to middle-class leftists ("Those cunts who go to university"). The time-scale of *Rude Boy* is from Jubilee to Thatcher, with the best documentary footage since *Meddout Cool*, and a dramatized section about police action against young blacks in Ladbroke.

At first sight *Rude Boy* could hardly be more different from Hazan's earlier film, *A Bigger Splash*. But there is one strong visual echo of the Hockney film in a shot of a white hotel against a bright blue sky with a bright red car parked in front, and the similarity goes much deeper than that. In *A Bigger Splash* Hazan documented the surfaces of Hockney's paintings and the audience to draw conclusions and make connections. Things happened and Hazan showed them, cruelly, precisely and beautifully. He does the same in *Rude Boy*.

The enormous difference between the two films is in fact one of surfaces. The world of *A Bigger Splash*

was rich, cosmopolitan, camp and beautiful; that of *Rude Boy* is poor, alienated, ugly and above all angry: riot general environment, to use the title of a Clash song, is "Garageland". The film is at its weakest, like the earlier one, when it manipulates: three scenes of more or less excruciating acting in which Ray discusses politics and rock-and-roll with the Clash's lead singer, Joe Strummer. It is at its strongest when it leaves the connections between events hanging. NF meetings, an anti-Nazi League concert and a Conservative rally at Central Hall are juxtaposed with dramatized scenes of Ray being arrested, vomiting after being beaten up by a bouncer at the Glasgow Apollo or being felled by a bored groupie in a club toilet, as well as of a young black being arrested for pickpocketing. Cut into all this are some of the best filmed rock concerts ever seen in a British movie. These scenes are so good that it is easy to lose sight of an irony which, almost by chance, becomes central to the film: in the course of the two and a half years it took to make *Rude Boy*, the Clash torn from a dirty punk band into a fairly clean rock one. The sweaty club scene at the beginning gives a strikingly simple method of combining the music with images of the world that produced it: Garageland.

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Parangs in Metroland

By Victoria Glendinning

Before the Party
Queen's

The Maugham story "Before the Party" is about a sullen widow who reveals to her conventional family just as they are about to leave for a garden party where they will meet a bishop, that in a fit of deeper gloom she murdered her dipsomaniac husband in Dorset with a parang. Rodney Ackland's play, first performed in 1949, fleshes out the story with extra characters—an old Scotch nanny (Madeleine Christie), an ex-lover (Jayne Torvill), a man and a new sailor (Miles Anderson) for the widow—and much humorous business, centring on the social aspirations of the middle-class parents, played with confident comic professionalism by Phyllis Catterall on the hithering, snobbish mother and Michael Gough as the solicitor father. The dumpy young widow of the story is transformed into Jane Asher, taut and witty, good to look at and to listen to.

But the Coward-and-custard social comedy that is the prevailing tone of the play is Ackland's version of the author's intention. But if so, it was a dangerous joke to put in a play which is in general so very wobbly.

Odium version of the sanitized rock classic "I fought the law (and the law won)".

By avoiding the time device of turning an uncomfortable present into some nightmare near-future (which made parts of Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* almost indistinguishable from Thame's recent *Quatermass*), *Rude Boy* comes up with a powerful picture of Britain in the early 1980s. But for all its political content it is a far from political film, and certainly not the piece of opportunistic left extremism this summary might suggest. *Rude Boy* makes no direct political statement. What is important about it is the equation it makes between the music and the social environment. Because the music still has the energy to shock, even if, to adapt Engels, the power of the bourgeois music business is such that it has turned Punk bourgeois, Hazan and Mingay have produced a film which is both a Punk Rock film and a film about Punk Rock; and they have achieved this not simply by filming concerts, and certainly not by creating a facile *Tommy*-like fantasy to repeat what the music has already said, but by strikingly simple method of combining the music with images of the world that produced it: Garageland.

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Edited by William H. Harris and Judith S. Levey

With over 3,000 three-column pages, more than 50,000 entries, nearly 700 illustrations, maps, and tables, a comprehensive cross-referencing system, and six and a half million words, *The New Columbia Encyclopedia* is, as the New York Times said, "the first one-volume encyclopedia in English worthy of the name." The fourth and latest edition, published in the U.S. in 1975, is now available for a much wider readership. Fourth edition £45

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Reading Scheme

Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun. Jane has a big doll. Peter has a ball. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Here is Mummy. She has baked a bun. Here is the milkman. He has come to call. Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun.

Go Peter! Go Jane! Come, milkman, come! The milkman likes Mummy. She likes them all. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Here are the curtains. They shut out the sun. Let us peep! On tiptoe Jane! You are small! Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun.

I hear a car, Jane. The milkman looks glum. Here is Daddy in his car. Daddy is tall. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Daddy looks very cross. Has he a gun? Up milkman! Up milkman! Over the wall! Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Wendy Cope



"Checks and Poes", an oil in the exhibition of recent paintings by Arthur Boyd at Fischer Fine Arts, 30 King Street, St James's, SW1, until April 11.

Edward Said's highly praised: Orientalism set out to correct the West's biased view of the Orient. His latest work, The Question of Palestine, formulates a plea to the West to recognize the real problems of Palestine and its people. John Bullock in the Sunday Telegraph comments: 'Said has all the qualifications needed to argue the Palestinian case, he does so with passion and conviction as well as a deep knowledge of the events and peoples of the area about which he is writing.' John Grigg in the Listener describes Said as one 'who combines the fervour of a patriot with the fastidiousness of a literary critic. His book shows throughout qualities not normally found in Third World attacks on Western policy, such as logic, humour, and a sense of proportion.' Jonathan Raban in the Sunday Times describes it as 'At once angry and scrupulously meticulous, Said tests out the narrative strategies, the retelling of history, the writing of new fictions which were necessary to enable "Palestine" to be reinvented from the ashes and "Israel" to take its place there.'

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RKP

The household Gods

By Geoffrey Hosking

FELICITY ANN O'DELL: Socialisation through Children's Literature
296pp. Cambridge University Press. £16.75.
0 521 21968 X

In Plato's *Republic* an important duty of the rulers was "in supervising the production of stories, and choosing only those we think suitable, rejecting the rest." Plato intended his prescription to refer to children, but in the Soviet Union it is applied by the authorities to all reading matter, including that for adults. Indeed, arguably children's literature there manifests more diversity, imagination and freedom than adult's. Felicity O'Dell suggests a reason for this: "In a sense Soviet children are God. Soviet men do not labour for the sake of divine recognition, but to bring a human life for his children." Offering to this God cannot be dead and dogmatic, and it is to accede to this, especially during the Stalin years, some of Russia's best writers, to keep their own imagination and integrity alive, turned to writing for children.

On the evidence of Dr O'Dell's book, the organization which goes into bringing this literature before children and helping them to read it is impressive indeed, and here perhaps Western educationalists will feel they have something to learn. Both the Soviet Writers' Union and the State Institute of Literature have special children's sections; publishing houses, journals and book centres are devoted to children's needs, and most libraries have one or more children's librarians, not only in select and purchase books, but also in guide children's reading, keeping records of each child's progress. If all this works in practice as it does on paper (and occasionally Dr O'Dell seems a little inclined, for lack of further evidence, to take the word for the deed), then Western parents, teachers and librarians will be

envious. Or does it all smack rather of totalitarian mind control? Dr O'Dell's book gives grounds for supposing that it does, and that any way to practice it is not wholly successful. She has examined primary school readers, runs of a popular children's journal (*Murzilka*), as well as familiar stories, to find her evidence. By her account this literature aims to induce in children the qualities which will make them amenable to control: discipline, collectivism, love of work, patriotism and dedication to the building of a happy future.

It may be noted in passing that some features which one might expect to encounter in a Marxist-Leninist upbringing are missing or underplayed: internationalism, egalitarianism, even atheism. At least implicitly, in fact, is a general social morality remarkably close to a rather conservative "bourgeois" stereotype: politeness and cleanliness are prized, male and female sex roles are traditional, and Russian nationalism (as distinct from Georgian or Uzbek, say) seems to be as essential as in the days of the "white man's burden" (from this point of view it would have been interesting to see some mention of literature from non-Russian republics, when they are going through a difficult period of their lives or have to take an important decision).

Often the care with which this material is devised and presented makes it effective. According to Konon Chukovsky (the most celebrated Soviet children's writer and a reliable witness), when a little Soviet girl heard one day that her father was to go to work, she asked "What about the Five-Year Plan?" Such solicitude for the national economy suggests a positively unhealthy degree of success in socializing children. There is also a fair amount of evidence (almost to the point of being tedious) that most Soviet citizens are to suggest that most Soviet citizens are

more apt than westerners to subordinate their own individual goals to the needs of the collective, or more prone to accept the military aims of their government, to regard foreigners with suspicion, and so on. Yet success is far from total. Foreigners are regarded not only with suspicion, but also with fascination, as emissaries from a forbidden and enticing world. Social work and party assignments are often undertaken, not out of devotion, but from a desire to get ahead and achieve promotion. Moreover, mimicry withdrawn from collective play into drunkenness, hooliganism and crime seems to be quite widespread, though shrouded in almost total secrecy broken only by occasional cautionary tales in the press. One problem may be that the educational system, with its promises of secular disciplines, leads children to expect a wholly fulfilling adult life, an expectation which is bound to be sharply disappointed.

There are also internal inconsistencies in the Soviet socialization process. Dr O'Dell compares it enlighteningly with the programme of character education envisaged for secular society by the French sociologist Durkheim. Though the Soviet system does much to inculcate "discipline" and "attachment to social groups", which are two of Durkheim's criteria, it ignores or even undermines the third one, "autonomy", by which Durkheim meant the capacity for independent thinking or creativity, and it tends to cultivate the kind of irrational myth-making which he abhorred. Until Soviet educators have learnt to promote individuality, and also genuine science as distinct from ideological pseudo-science, they will, Dr O'Dell feels, have difficulty in establishing an integrated secular morality.

In this country, where nothing remains of the grand Victorian consensus on socialization save the compulsory weekly religious education slot in schools, educationalists sometimes recommend both better organization and more state-sponsored uniformity. Dr O'Dell's book is highly recommended, both for its positive and negative findings, to everyone who is concerned about this debate.

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WHSMITH

The beauties of the bush

By Randolph Stow

ALISON ALEXANDER: Billabong's Author The Life of Mary Grant Bruce 149pp. Angus and Robertson, £6.95. 0 207 13766 8

The dust-jacket of *Billabong's Author* is modelled on those of the old Ward Lock editions of its subjects' works, and the book's main appeal will be to female Australians who remember them. As it is based largely on the recollections of Mrs Bruce's loyal family, it will abate no illusions. Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958) emerges as a quiet and wholesome "Tory body" with the ability to write on occasions, rather well. The description in *Robin* of an approaching bushfire is very good indeed. One can understand why her acerbic Irish sister-in-law thought similar passages wasted on children.

This thoughtful lady comes as a relief in a biography otherwise full of revelations on the "MGB" as called at cricket crosswords, and "had a great affinity for nature", demonstrated by going for walks to her brother, of his wife's most popular creations. Evelyn Bruce writes: "The four children have become models of discipline, with four names but with no individuality, and that even a distinction of age or sex. They are a composite photograph made up of so much love of horses, so much skill in tennis, chess, a touch of superstition as always to come out top this, and a big dash of Strong Silent Englishman to give ballast to the whole."

The four in question are David Linton, strong silent owner of a stadium called Billabong in Edwardian Victoria, his motherless daughter Norma, a winning son Jim, and Jim's thirteenth-year-old sister Wally. And Evelyn Bruce's estimate

of them is just enough, though they are so extremely harmless that justice might have been tempered with mercy. But then, she was not an Australian. For a great many Australian readers, too, it is to go to work, she asked "What about the Five-Year Plan?" Such solicitude for the national economy suggests a positively unhealthy degree of success in socializing children. There is also a fair amount of evidence (almost to the point of being tedious) that most Soviet citizens are to suggest that most Soviet citizens are

Mary Grant Bruce herself knew bush life as a visitor rather than as a year-round bushwoman. Her father, an Irish land surveyor from an Ascendancy family in reduced circumstances, lived modestly in country towns. Her mother's family, however, belonged to the Gipsyland "aristocracy", and her descriptions of station life, which good judges praised, were inspired by holiday spots with her grand parents and an uncle, a twenty-year-old Mary Grant Bruce, and became a journalist, working, mainly on a children's page, for which she wrote short fiction. Some favourite characters kept reappearing, and without planning it she wrote a serial, which turned into *A Little Bush Maid*, published in London in 1910.

This had considerable success in Australia, or did two further Billabong books which followed, and in 1913 she was able to make her first trip abroad. In Ireland, visiting her father's brothers, she met Major George Bruce, a success story. She was thirty-five and he eleven years older, but they suited one another and decided to marry. During the Great War Major Bruce, slightly disabled in South Africa, served in England and, and in the Billabong books, the Gipsyland and Wally followed their creator's move-

ments (though Jim and Wally were, of course, at the front much of the time), sharing her opinions of the quiet Irish and the stiff English, and at last thankfully retreating to the greater reality of Gipsyland.

The Bruses, now with two sons, also made that journey, and stayed for eight years, but for the rest of their lives were rather nomadic. In 1927 they settled in Ulster, where two years later they lost their younger son, aged twelve, in an accident with a shotgun. When Mary was seven her favourite brother had died in a similar accident. Both parents were shattered, and began afterwards to show an interest in the occult, of which Alison Alexander finds some signs in the later books, though MGB remained a conventional Anglican and the least cranky of ladies.

After spending the depressed 1930s uncomfortably in England, they returned in 1939 to Australia, where Mary made patriotic broadcasts, sold her autobiography to raise money for the Red Cross, wrote her last book (*Billabong Riders*, 1942) and was generally fitted. Following her husband's death in 1949 she shuffled regularly between Melbourne and London, and died at Boxhill, aged eighty, in 1958. She was a highly intelligent and a complicated type, and remains one of the public persons of Sir Robert Menzies.

Her biographer reports that her novels, after fading from view to the late 1960s and early 1970s, are now making a comeback. New readers of the 1980s may find certain things about them rather odd, such as that the characters rarely say anything (except, perhaps, to fight), preferring to report, expostulate or ejaculate. But they will probably survive, for the reason which Mrs Alexander very sensibly suggests. "For those who want to go back to an older time, and see what Australians thought of themselves fifty years ago, there is no better picture of the ideal or legend of rural Australia than that given by the Billabong books."